United Nations S/PV.6341

Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6341 st meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Ms. Espinosa Cantellano/Mr. Heller/Mr. Puente	(Mexico)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mr. Moretti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Issoze-Ngondet
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Nigeria	Mr. Lolo
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181)

Letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/314)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506.

10-40745 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181)

Letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2010/314)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Myanmar, Nepal, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, the Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Thailand, Viet Nam and Yemen, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda.

In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 11 June 2010 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, has been issued as document S/2010/316 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in and be inscribed on the list of speakers for he meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Wednesday, 16 June 2010, in connection with the item 'Children and armed conflict'."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend invitations under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund; and Ms. Manju Gurung.

It is so decided.

I should like also to inform the Council that I have received a letter from His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, in which he requests to be invited, in his capacity as acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Serrano to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2010/181, containing the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and document S/2010/314, containing a letter dated 15 June 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept paper on the item under consideration.

Let me say that it is a great honour for me, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, to be here

today to preside over this special meeting of the Security Council on this topic of particular importance to us all. I take this opportunity to thank all members of the Security Council for the support they have extended to Mexico throughout its participation in the work of the Council and particularly in the course of its presidency this month.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Mr. Atul Khare, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson and Ms. Manju Gurung.

I shall now give the floor to Ms. Coomaraswamy.

Ms. Coomaraswamy: I wish once again to thank the Government of Mexico for presiding over this important debate on children and armed conflict. Your presence here today, Madame Minister, elevates the discussion and your words provide a framework for the serious deliberations that must follow.

Since the last report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2009/158), we have had some measurable progress in important areas. The Security Council adopted resolution 1882 (2009), which now makes sexual violence against children and the killing and maiming of children contrary to international law grounds for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's report. This naming and shaming exercise, along with the possibility of sanctions against persistent violators, has persuaded parties to cease their reprehensible behaviour and should deter others from future offences. The collective voice of the Council, guided by the common moral compunction of humanity to protect its children, must be used to make outcasts of those who commit unspeakable acts against children in war.

I cannot emphasize enough how important this is. Just two weeks ago, I was in Gulu, Uganda, where I met with a girl named Agnes who had just escaped from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). She fled with a baby born of rape, fearing for her life and that of her infant child as the LRA splintered and regrouped across the region. She could hardly express herself. Years of abuse had broken her spirit. We cannot ignore Agnes or those like her. The Council's decision to make sexual violence and the killing and maiming of children grounds for listing by the Secretary-General is the first step in the right direction.

The Council's decision to expand the triggers requires that we further develop our methodologies and practices to collect reliable information and to guide the field with regard to action plans. For the past few months, my Office has been working with Ms. Patricia Sellers, whose extensive experience with both the International Criminal Tribunals for Yugoslavia and Rwanda has brought new momentum to the discussions on action plans. In close consultation with our United Nations partners, she is developing templates for action plans on the killing and maiming of children and on sexual violence against children. I am glad to say that she is finalizing guidance to the field on resolution 1882 (2009), which will enhance the monitoring and reporting on the two triggers. With regard to sexual violence in particular, I welcome the appointment of Ms. Margot Wallström, the new Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and I am pleased to report that we are already working very closely and are looking into common strategies. I look forward to a fruitful collaboration.

Parties listed in the Secretary-General's report can be de-listed if they enter into an action plan with the United Nations We have also had marked successes with regard to the formulation of action plans required by the Security Council. Within the framework of such an action plan, the Maoist party in Nepal released almost 3,000 minors in an extraordinary process in which the whole United Nations worked together as one. My office, the United Nations Mission in Nepal, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as their national partners, worked very closely together to secure the agreement and implement the terms of the release.

It was an important moment for the United Nations in Nepal. Children were identified, registered and sent home. At the moment, our child protection partners are tracking these boys and girls in their home villages to ensure that they are included in the reintegration process. Later this morning, the Council will hear from Manju, a Nepali girl who was taken by the Maoist forces at the age of 13 and remained with them for two years. Since her release, she has rebuilt her life and is a model for other children. Manju has travelled a long way to share her story with us so that her experience will not be repeated in any part of the world.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front from the Philippines has also entered into an action plan with the United Nations. The terms have been agreed and activities outlined. Our main challenge now is to assist in the reintegration of these children. Unless we provide the United Nations in the Philippines with assistance to secure schooling or livelihood training, they will either be re-recruited or tempted by other, less peaceful avenues. It is crucial that the international community step up to the plate and give these children a real future. I appeal to all Member States represented here to support the reintegration process. I also call upon the ceasefire mechanism in place in Mindanao to include the monitoring of child rights violations in its mandated activities.

In the Sudan, there have also been some successes. In the past month, we have moved forward on commitments by the Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will and the Sudan Liberation Army/Abu Gasim from Darfur to release children and to give unhindered access to the United Nations for verification purposes. The ceasefire agreement between the Liberation and Justice Movement and the Government of the Sudan includes specific key provisions for the release of children and is reflective of the priority and commitment to children on the side of the parties. I urge that all subsequent ceasefire or peace agreements include provisions for child protection. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army has also entered into an action plan for the release of children associated with their forces this year. Again, child protection partners have the responsibility to make this reintegration a success.

Despite these successes, many challenges remain. In the report before the Council (S/2010/181), the Secretary-General has highlighted a list of the most persistent violators who have been on the annexes of his reports for a minimum of five years. As the Secretary-General's independent voice for children affected by armed conflict, it is my duty to persuade this body to move forward on taking action against these violators. In this regard, resolution 1882 (2009) calls for closer cooperation among sanctions committees of the Council. The Sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo had the foresight to include crimes against children as grounds for listing, and I urge other sanctions committees to also consider the same. I had the honour of addressing the Democratic Republic of the Congo Committee and to thank its members for the fair hearing they gave to our recommendations. I look forward to deeper engagement with other relevant sanctions committees.

That being said, we would also need to move forward to devise appropriate mechanisms to deal with the large number of parties listed in the Secretary-General's annexes that are not covered by sanctions committees. I hope that the Council will sharpen its focus on this issue so that perpetrators do not sense reluctance on the part of the Council to hold them fully accountable. After all these noble efforts by this body, the Security Council should not be perceived to be part of the cycle of impunity.

Many parties have been listed in the Secretary-General's reports for recruiting and using children, committing sexual violence against children, and killing and maiming children. The vast majority are non-State actors, who need to enter into action plans with the United Nations to be de-listed. We urge Governments to endorse this process in the best interest of the children as a humanitarian imperative towards saving children's lives. Without access to dialogue with non-State actors on action plans, the chances of securing the release of children is very slim.

In recent times, new issues have also emerged with regard to children and armed conflict. The first is the ever-increasing pattern of attacks on schools. This has become a very disturbing phenomenon that requires urgent attention. The United Nations system has always argued that children and schools should be zones of peace. Instead, schools themselves are increasingly being targeted. The classroom, once a sacred space, has become a place of fear. It is important that we respond to this crisis effectively, working with local communities so that children, especially girls, are not placed at risk and are not denied their right to education during or after conflict.

We are also discovering that more and more children are being used for military intelligence purposes by different armed forces and groups around the world. Recently, we have been engaged in bilateral advocacy against this practice in a number of situations. Children should be handed over to child protection institutions and partners within 48 hours of their capture. This is extremely important. Placing them at risk or subjecting them to prolonged interrogation will only make it more difficult for their proper reintegration into their communities.

We are increasingly concerned about the changing nature of warfare in different parts of the world and the difficult challenges it poses for child protection partners. In some wars, we find children being used as suicide bombers; there were seven such cases in Afghanistan and several in Iraq in 2009. Attacks on schools and denial of humanitarian access, where the neutrality of humanitarian actors is not respected, are also posing major dilemmas. We are just starting to fully explore how we should deal with such phenomena. We do not as yet have the answers.

Counterinsurgency also poses its own set of difficulties. The number of children being killed in aerial bombardments and drone strikes is a matter of great concern. I had the opportunity to meet General McChrystal, the commander of the international forces in Afghanistan, who reassured me that the protection of civilians is an important part of military strategy in Afghanistan and explained the measures taken to minimize civilian casualties. Nevertheless, children continue to die, and in 2009 137 Afghan children were killed by aerial bombardment alone. We do commend the steps taken recently in this regard, but would like to impress upon all actors that vigilance is necessary and that the killing of children must be avoided at all cost.

Finally, it is 10 years since the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict was adopted. My office, along with our partners, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, has begun the "Zero Under Eighteen" campaign for the universal ratification of the Protocol. I will be knocking on the doors of those who have not signed and ratified, and encouraging those who have ratified to speak to their neighbours. Universal ratification signifies an international moral consensus — a consensus that is necessary to give further strength to laws and norms protecting children from unlawful recruitment.

In my work with this Council, I have been encouraged by the political will to reach consensus on issues relating to children. It is this consensus that empowers and emboldens us, both in the field and at Headquarters, to work with heart and spirit for the protection of children.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Coomaraswamy for her statement and for the information she has given us, and I appreciate the work she is doing. We encourage her to continue moving forward with the same dedication and enthusiasm.

I now give the floor to Mr. Atul Khare.

Mr. Khare: I thank you, Madame, for inviting the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to participate in this important debate. It is a great honour for me to address the Security Council on the critical issue of the protection of children affected by armed conflict.

The adoption of resolution 1261 (1999) placed the protection of children firmly on the peace and security agenda. With a total of seven Security Council resolutions, the issue of children and armed conflict is undoubtedly one in which the Security Council has invested deeply in the past decade. Nonetheless, children continue to be victimized in conflict situations around the world, and our sustained engagement is required on this vital issue. In that regard, for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the inclusion of specific child protection provisions in the mandates of peacekeeping operations and the related deployment of child protection advisers to peacekeeping operations have helped us to follow up on the implementation of key aspects of Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict.

In collaboration with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has continued to strengthen its activities to protect children affected by conflict in the countries where peacekeeping missions are deployed. Today, we have child protection advisers in nine peacekeeping operations. In the past year, we have established a focal point in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, and efforts are under way to strengthen our child protection presence in Afghanistan with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

The child protection advisers have continued to contribute directly to the missions' priority-setting and policy formulation and are working to ensure that concerns related to children affected by conflict are adequately addressed throughout our activities by promoting mainstreaming, monitoring and reporting, training and advocacy. We believe that it is crucial to strengthen the deployment of child protection advisers wherever children are significantly affected by conflict.

At the political level in the field, peacekeeping missions are engaging in dialogue with parties to conflicts towards the preparation of action plans to end and address the grave violations committed against children affected by armed conflict. We are also following up on commitments obtained by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict during her high-level visits and advocacy missions. This priority activity is undertaken hand in hand with UNICEF and other members of the United Nations task forces on monitoring and reporting at the country level.

Alongside other child protection actors, we have registered significant progress in this regard. In April, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) reported that the Sudan Liberation Army/Abu Gasim had issued a command order, prohibiting the recruitment, mobilization and use of child soldiers. This followed a meeting between UNAMID, UNICEF and the armed group to discuss the development of actions plans, following a commitment issued by the group to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General during her visit to the Sudan in November 2009.

Efforts continue to reach out to armed groups for commitment and implementation of action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other grave violations committed against children. Yesterday, 15 June, the Sudan Liberation Army/Free Will also made commitments to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and issued a command order to that effect. In Chad last week, Governments of the region, including those of Chad, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Niger, Nigeria and the Sudan, signed the N'Djamena Declaration, stressing the need to end the recruitment and use of children by armed forces.

At the operational level, monitoring and reporting on grave violations committed against children are an ongoing priority. Today, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations co-chairs five monitoring and reporting mechanisms of country-level task forces. We attach great importance to the monitoring and reporting mechanism process, which is pivotal to promoting accountability for violations committed against children and strengthening the overall response to the needs of children in conflict situations.

With the recent adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), we are working to improve the collection of accurate, timely and verified information by leveraging other monitoring capacities and resources within peacekeeping operations. Most importantly, we are exploring ways of improving our reporting on sexual violence committed against children, in close collaboration with all key monitoring and reporting mechanism partners in the light of resolution 1888 (2009) on sexual violence in armed conflict.

We are also investing heavily in providing training on child protection and child rights for all of our peacekeepers, as required by the Security Council. Training is one of the most important tools for creating awareness of the impact of armed conflict on children, the standards that govern child protection, and the role that each peacekeeper can play in protecting children. Last year alone, over 8,500 peacekeeping personnel received training on child protection in four peacekeeping missions. Over 66 per cent of those trained were military personnel, and another 26 per cent were police personnel.

In the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti, our advisers are reporting that the training has resulted in a heightened awareness of key child protection issues among the military and the police, and yielded specific interventions for the benefit of children. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our military observers trained in child protection are working in close collaboration with our child protection teams and human rights components to provide critical information on the situation of children in remote and inaccessible areas. In Haiti, the military personnel of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti are currently developing their own guidelines on child protection with the support of our child protection team. In Southern Sudan, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan has provided support to the local police in establishing specific women's and children's desks and offering training to them, jointly with our child protection teams.

Recognizing the importance of providing training for all peacekeeping personnel on child protection, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations is partnering with UNICEF, with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children Affected by Armed Conflict and with Save the Children Sweden in an initiative aimed at reviewing and standardizing our training materials and

strengthening pre-deployment and in-mission training to extend our overall reach and cover.

At the strategic and policy level, in June last year the Department adopted a system-wide policy on mainstreaming the protection of children affected by armed conflict into the work of United Nations peacekeeping operations. That policy underscores the important role that the special representatives of the Secretary-General must play in promoting the rights and concerns of children affected by armed conflict and in ensuring effective and systematic follow-up to Security Council resolutions on children and armed conflict. That policy is our highest-level commitment to the protection of children in armed conflict, and we are working towards the development of an implementation plan that will provide the necessary operational guidance for our teams on the ground.

The Department recognizes the importance of coordinating closely with other operational actors, especially UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, and we have prioritized the strengthening and structuring our partnerships with those key actors as part of our delivery on child protection. At both Headquarters and the field level, the Department will continue to develop protection strategies with UNICEF and relevant child protection agencies and with our partners in the United Nations country team, building on the comparative advantages of each actor.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our unwavering commitment to the protection of children in conflict situations, being fully aware that it is only by our collective and concerted engagement at all levels that we can secure real protection for children affected by war. As always, we continue to look to the Security Council for specific mandates, leadership, guidance and support.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Khare for the very important information he has given us today.

I now give the floor to Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Johnson: Children affected by armed conflict deserve protection. Not only that, they have the right to be protected from all violations of their rights. The Security Council has shown courage in leading international efforts to end grave violations against children in armed conflict. We truly appreciate that.

On behalf of UNICEF, I would also like to thank Mexico for its exceptional leadership in driving this agenda forward in the Security Council. Without Mexico's support and dedication and that of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, progress we have seen in recent years would not have been possible. And with your continued commitment and determination, Madam President, and that of all Council members, we may have the opportunity to end grave violations against children in armed conflict.

We must never forget what is at stake. Last year, I visited a major demobilization centre operated by the armed forces in Chad. The boys were still in combat uniform when I met them. Their stories were horrific — they had witnessed brutal attacks on their homes and families; they had seen their houses burnt, their livelihoods destroyed. The boys had been forced to join rebel groups. When I asked them about their hopes for the future, all ten had one singular, uniform ambition: education. They wanted to go to school. That was the key to their future.

We cannot ignore their stories or deny them the fulfilment of their dreams. That is within our collective reach, but it will require sustained engagement at the highest possible level, stronger partnerships and robust delivery in the field. Together we can report on violations and identify violators. We can take action to ensure compliance with Security Council provisions, and we can protect and assist those that are the most vulnerable: children.

The past year has been marked by notable progress. Action plans to end child recruitment have been signed by parties to conflict in the Philippines, Nepal and the Sudan. Thousands of children have been released from armed groups and armed forces. In 2009, a little over 9,500 children were removed from armed groups and armed forces in countries implementing the monitoring and reporting mechanism. However, that number does not include the almost 3,000 children who were released in Nepal — which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has just referred to — in January and February this year. It does include 5,900 children in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo and 1,400 children in the Sudan who have now embarked on the long and challenging process of reintegration with their families and communities.

These numbers tell a compelling story: Security Council resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005) work. They are making a real difference in children's lives. Now we need to take our collective efforts one step further — not a small step, but a major one. We need to make change happen in the lives of many more children, as the Special Representative just highlighted in her statement.

Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) was a formidable breakthrough. The vision and courage demonstrated by the Council in passing that resolution cannot be overstated. It expands the triggers for listing parties so that more of the grave violations are associated with the Council's naming and shaming efforts. Such grave violations also merit strong reactions and punitive measures against the perpetrators. We are pleased that the Security Council is willing to take such action.

With resolution 1888 (2009), on sexual violence and rape as a weapon of war, the Council provides a further opportunity to consolidate the framework at our disposal to hold violators accountable. On our side, we stand ready to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, in her important mission.

UNICEF welcomes the two triggers for listing of parties who commit rape and other forms of grave sexual violence and who kill and maim children. Sexual violence is still regularly used as a weapon of war with the strategic intent to humiliate and demoralize individuals, tear apart families and destroy communities. As many of us have experienced during visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the stories women and girls tell us are just horrific. They bear the brunt of that violence. The humiliation, stigma, exclusion and deep physical and psychological scars remain with them, in many cases destroying their lives.

Children still account for a considerable number of war-related casualties. When they are not directly targeted or used in war, they often fall victim to the indiscriminate use of force. They are most affected by landmines, cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons and explosive remnants of war. It is commendable that the Security Council has decided to address this most basic grave violation against the rights of children.

In total, therefore, three of the six grave violations in conflict are now subject to the Security Council framework. To be able to list, we need adequate monitoring and reporting mechanisms. UNICEF is fully committed to strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanisms in relation to all three violations in all countries concerned. We also need monitoring and reporting to hold violators accountable. Indeed, our ambition should be to utilize the full potential of this framework, holding perpetrators accountable and bringing them to justice, and to enforce measures against violators through existing sanctions regimes.

We also need to focus on other grave violations against children. The Special Representative has already expressed concern about the trend of attacks on schools. That trend must be reversed. In addition, the continued denial of humanitarian access in situations of armed conflict, such as in Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan, has grave implications for children. Our colleagues in the field in those situations take considerable risk when they engage with parties to conflict, often non-State actors, to reach children in need of assistance, to provide protection where there is no rule of law and to safeguard schools as zones of peace. That is easier said than done. We constantly look for new approaches to deliver on our promise to children in the field. Humanitarian access is imperative, and denying it is unacceptable.

The child protection framework for children and armed conflict supported by the Security Council spells out the accountability of perpetrators. At the same time, it lays out the responsibilities of key stakeholders, including the Security Council and its Working Group, concerned national Governments, the United Nations, Member States, donors and civil society. Thanks to the monitoring and reporting in countries listed by the Council and other situations of concern, we cannot claim ignorance when it comes to the situation of children. The extent of grave violations perpetrated against children is known. Never have we been so well informed. Silence is not an option, nor is inaction. We have a collective duty to act. We all are accountable to the children whose stories we hear.

UNICEF stands ready to assist the Security Council and its Working Group as it utilizes all the

tools at its disposal for clear and determined action. We look forward to supporting possible missions to the field to consider the information compiled by our colleagues, assisting in-country advocacy efforts and helping mobilize the required resources to improve the situation of children affected by armed conflict. As indicated in resolution 1882 (2009), donors must also ensure that operational agencies have the necessary capacity to address grave violations and deliver results for children.

Together with our partners, UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative have taken several key initiatives to strengthen the monitoring of grave violations in follow-up to resolution 1882 (2009), including a global roll-out of a new monitoring and reporting mechanism field manual and training toolkit, as well as the development of practical action plan templates. This will lead to a more systematic and effective implementation of the mechanism, where UNICEF normally is co-chair in the field.

In UNICEF, we have ensured that the protection of children and women in armed conflict and other crises are prioritized in our Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. We are scaling up initiatives to raise awareness and develop capacity across the board — among our country offices in all countries listed and situations of concern, in regional offices and headquarters and among key partners — to improve the monitoring and reporting mechanism and our protection programmes. None of that would be possible without strong partnerships. Cooperation with United Nations entities — in particular peacekeeping and the child protection advisers, as my colleague just explained, and special political missions — and with concerned Governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society is essential to all our efforts.

But to be able to take action, the legal framework must be in place. A couple of weeks ago we commemorated the tenth anniversary of the two Optional Protocols of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. UNICEF strongly urges all Member States that have not yet signed, ratified and implemented the Optional Protocols to do so as a matter of priority and urgency. We encourage all Member States to effectively implement the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups.

This is also the year of the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Somalia is the only country in the world where an entire generation — the two past decades — has known only violence and conflict and where grave violations are committed against children every day, by all parties.

As children in Somalia deserve a better future, so does the boy whom I met in the Central African Republic a few months back. He was only nine years old and had been demobilized from the rebel group Armée pour la Restauration de la République et la Démocratie. As tears streamed down his cheeks, he told me about the horrible pictures that came before his eyes over and over again. They would never leave his head. His name was Futur. His only wish was to go home. Indeed, for Futur and for those 10 boys in Chad, and for millions of other children, the principles and values of the Convention stand as a beacon of hope for a better future. It is our collective obligation to turn them into reality in their lives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, for her important briefing. I should also like to highlight the value of the work on peacekeeping being done jointly by UNICEF and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, non-governmental organizations and civil society. I also wish to emphasize the need for all of us to continue to encourage that teamwork in order to strengthen our ability to act.

I now give the floor to Ms. Manju Gurung, who, as Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy has already pointed out, was a child soldier in Nepal.

Ms. Gurung (*spoke in Nepalese; English text provided by the speaker*): Let me thank you for inviting me. It is a great honour for me.

I am a girl from Nepal. I was born in the central region of Nepal. I'm here not only to talk about my own story but on behalf of all children in armed conflict who face and survive the atrocities of war. I will start by telling you some of the stories of my past.

In my family, I am the second of five children. I have a mother and father, one elder sister, two younger sisters and one younger brother. My family is very poor. My father drives a rickshaw from morning to evening and my mom works at home and also does

agricultural work. It is difficult for us to have good clothing and good food. Despite our difficulties, my parents had managed to send me and my siblings to school.

I was 13 years old when I completed fifth grade and moved to a new school to start the sixth grade. The new school was a one-hour hike up a steep hill from my home. At that time, I had just started thinking about my future. My dream was to complete my education and become a teacher in my own village. But things did not happen the way that I had imagined.

That September of 2005, during a school holiday, I walked to my house to bring some food. As I reached my home, I realized that the Maoists had organized a programme at my old school. The Maoists had demanded that each family should send one family member to their programme under the one-family/one member campaign. I had to go there because my parents were not at home. They had gone to the market. After the programme, the Maoists told me that I needed to go with them for seven days.

During that time, they gave me an orientation to the Maoist party. Seven days passed but they did not talk about sending me home. When I said that I wanted to go home, they said "You'll have to come with us forever". I said, "What is the use of small people like me in this party?" But they said, "Small people will one day become big people." I told them, "I'm of the age for studying, and not of the age to go with you." But they did not agree to that. At that time, I did not know that children had rights and that recruiting a 13-year-old was a crime. I did not have a choice, so I followed them.

There were many other children my age who were brought forcefully or who had been coerced or enticed with promises. They would not give us food on time, and there were many children like me who wanted to go home. They would not give us clothes, and we would only receive NPR50 — or $0.75 a month — for our toiletries. We had to buy undergarments, toothpaste and toothbrushes with that money.

Although we were small, we had to work very hard. The Maoists were organizing a campaign to win the villagers' trust and would construct roads and trenches and till land. I had to help with this work. To construct roads, I would carry heavy loads of boulders and stones and help dig the roads. We would walk from one district to another, often at night, in groups of 50 to 60 people, through the jungle, for more than 12 to 14 hours at a stretch. I would get so tired I felt I was dead. I couldn't sleep, and sometimes I would cry a lot. But there was no one for me to talk to or to help or protect me.

For a few days, we would stay in one of the hilly districts or a district in the southern plains and work for villagers, as instructed by the party. We would stay and eat in some of the villagers' homes. In one of the districts, the Party did not have a good reputation and so we had to move through that place quickly. In other districts, we would stay longer — up to a month. I was always afraid because we had to hide from the army and make sure they did not find us.

While I travelled from one place to another, I saw many other children going to school. That made me very sad. I would think that if I were at home I would be going to school, too. I made friends who were my age. We shared our emotions and our sadness, but there was no hope for us. My life had become sad and painful. I missed my parents a lot and I wanted to run away from there.

After travelling for almost 12 months, we returned to my home district. By this time, it was October 2006 and I was 14 years old. I had not talked to my family in a year. They knew I was with the Maoists but did not know where I was. They could not come for me because they were afraid of the repercussions that all of us might face. When we came back to my district, I really wanted to go home. But what could I do? I was scared that if the Nepalese Army saw me, they would kill me or my parents. Our neighbour was a commander with the Maoists, and I was scared that if I went home the Maoists would again find me and take me back. There was no way to escape. When I asked some of my friends if they wanted to go home, they would say, "Who does not want to go home? But there is nothing for us at home. Now we have to live and die here."

But I took a risk and secretly sent a letter to my mother. I told her where I was and asked her to come and bring me back home. Despite the risks, my mother and sister found me and took me back to my village. The Maoists did not prevent me from leaving but they terrified us with their threats. They said, "We will find you again and we can do whatever we want to if we find you again." I went back to my village, but I never

stopped worrying for me and my family. I went back to school and, after a month, the Maoists held another recruitment campaign and took students from different schools to participate. My school was requested to send seven children to the programme. I was one of them and so I was taken again.

They made us walk to another district on an empty stomach. When we arrived, they made us go in small groups of three to four people to people's homes and ask for food and lodging. One woman did not have food for herself and her family, but she feared us and gave the corn that she had set aside for seed. I had only one set of clothes and I would wear them for 10 to 11 days. Sometimes I would exchange clothes with others in the Party.

By the time I had been with the Maoists for around 15 months, they enrolled me in their training programme. We would dig tunnels and crawl through them, and sometimes we had to jump to the ground from a height of 10 feet. Holding our weapons and gear, we had to climb ropes. They trained me to use .303 British rifles, INSAS rifles, single-loading rifles and AK-47s. They also taught us how to make and detonate bombs. We had to wear shorts and short-sleeved shirts and do leopard crawls during training, and my skin had cuts, scabs and bruises. I was still a little girl of only 14, and my body was hardly fit for such intense training. I started developing symptoms and problems in my heart and throat.

Out of 160 people in my training, I finished in second place. After the training, many of my friends ran away, but some of us just could not. Since I graduated second, they made me the commander over seven people. It was my turn to train other children. Many people were forced to marry others within the Party. This was a way to ensure that they would stay with the Party. I did not want to marry, and I was beaten up several times for that. In the meantime, I had become section vice-commander and my responsibilities had increased. Days passed and I started to accept my fate and to understand that this life had become my life. I felt sad, damaged and hopeless.

One day I fainted. One of my senior commanders said that I was faking to avoid working and carrying arms. I was very angry and went to another commander. In a very angry voice, I told him what had happened to me and that I needed medical attention. I said that if they could not give it to me, then I needed to go home. The commander told me that I had violated the rules by approaching him and asking to be relieved of my duties and go home. To punish me, they demoted me and made me work as a cook for six months. After six months, I asked for a leave and they granted it. I stayed home for 10 to 11 days, but I could not stay in the village longer. Villagers treated me badly, bullied me and talked behind my back. So I returned to the Maoists.

Within the Party, I had many friends who had not returned home in more than one or two years. Many of my friends had died fighting and many had become disabled while fighting. Most of us were weak. At times during the war, we would not be able to eat for an entire week. Sometimes we survived on water and corn flour. Some of my close friends who had been in combat told me that it was always the youngest who were sent to the front line and that the commanders gave orders from behind. I had not been sent to the front line yet, since I had not completed the combat training. Luckily, after I was trained and they were planning to send me to the next round of active fighting, the peace agreement was signed and I did not have to fight.

After the peace agreement was signed, people from the Maoist Party were gathered into cantonments and there was talk of a registration and verification process. The United Nations had been called in, and many of us went into the first registration that it conducted. I was one of them. The Maoists constructed seven cantonments across Nepal.

At that time, the senior commanders used to tell me, "You are a commander. You need to have more patience and you need to look after your members." They also used to give me medicine, saying that it would cure my heart and throat problems. They would also tell me that my heart and throat problems would go away if I got married. But I still did not want to, so they continued to harass and threaten me. Because of my hard work, they made me a section commander. I think they also thought that if I was promoted, I would be more inclined to get married. Time passed and my health worsened. I managed to tell my sister and uncle. So one day they came, and without asking any of the commanders, I just left the camp.

In May 2007, I returned home. I was 15 years old. I was very happy, but I was also scared. I was afraid that the Party would take me again or that the

army would kill me if they found out who I was. In the village, everyone continued to show suspicion towards me and to talk behind my back. My parents could no longer send me to school, and I had to leave. I went to the nearest city, where I worked as a housemaid.

One day, I received a call from my sister saying that someone who worked with children affected by armed conflict had come to our home. She said they would help children like me. So I came home and met with them. They convinced me to go back to school, although I was shy about returning to the sixth grade. I started my education again. Meanwhile, the Maoists continued to threaten me. I had to stay at my uncle's house to hide from them, but they would not leave me alone. They came to his home and asked me to come along with them. I was always scared.

Finally, one person who worked for human rights intervened and helped me formally seek release from the Maoist Party. Then it became easier for me to stay in my village. Some of these organizations helped me readjust to life and build relationships with members of the community. Now I am well respected in my community and my school, and I regularly participate in and lead child rights-related programmes in my school and village. Now I also have friends, and children like to play with me and talk to me.

Since my family was poor, some organizations helped us to generate income. Today, I raise a little livestock. They also paid for my throat surgery. They helped me form a children's club which advocates for children's rights and on HIV issues. I am the president of the club, which counts 40 children among its members. Now, I have a new life.

Not long ago, I heard through the radio that there was a formal discharge process for children who remained in the cantonments. I am happy that they will now have a chance to choose what they want to do with their lives. But I also feel sad for them because I have been through the challenges they will now have to face.

I truly thank the Security Council for listening to my story, for it is the story of hundreds of Nepalese children. Thanks to the help and trust of the United Nations, including UNICEF and local organizations, some of us have been able to recover. I am one of them. I am very happy now. I am in the ninth grade at the school in my village, and I still dream of becoming a teacher.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Ms. Gurung for having been kind enough to share her experience with us. I would also like to note the courage of this young girl, who has described very clearly today the tragedy of the situation of children in armed conflict. I believe that this should be a source for inspiration to all us to continue to strengthen the work of the United Nations in this area.

With the Council's permission, I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico.

I am grateful for this opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of my country to the full respect of human rights and international humanitarian law. Mexico today reaffirms its commitment to ensuring the full protection of civilians in armed conflicts, in particular women and children.

Mexico is convinced that we have made substantive progress in the Security Council's treatment of the promotion and protection of children affected by armed conflict. The adoption of resolution 1882 (2009), which strengthens and broadens the United Nations mechanisms for protecting minors in cases of armed conflict, is an example of this progress.

In thanking Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for presenting the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), I note that this year the annexes to the report include the names not only of those who recruit or use children in armed conflict, but also of those who commit criminal acts against them. While these are important steps, there is still much to do if we truly want to spare children from being the principal victims of the spiral of violence generated by armed conflicts around the world.

In the past two decades alone, more than 2 million children in areas of armed conflict have died, another six million have been disabled, more than a quarter of a million young people have been exploited as child soldiers in different regions of the world, and thousands more have been victims of sexual exploitation, rape and prostitution.

These figures are heartbreaking, but they say very little about the personal and direct suffering of the children involved. That is why, very personally but also on behalf of Mexico and the Security Council, I should like to commend the courage and testimony of Manju

Gurung, this former child soldier who has urged us to act decisively for children in situations of armed conflict.

Mexico also appeals to the Security Council to continue, within the framework of its competences, to address the repercussions of armed conflicts on children, and to promote concrete action to comply with the recommendations of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My country vigorously defends the principle of the higher interests of children, and believes that we must step up our efforts as a community to provide broad and effective protection to children. Crimes committed against children cannot be stopped if their perpetrators remain unpunished. Serious violations of fundamental principles and norms of international humanitarian law are war crimes, and Members States have the primary obligation to investigate and prosecute those responsible for such violations. We support the recommendation contained in the report of the Secretary-General that the Council consider stronger measures against those who persist in violating the rights of children in armed conflict.

Transparency and accountability in the protection of children in armed conflict have become crucial priorities. In cases where States have neither the capacity nor the willingness to prosecute those presumed responsible for these crimes, the International Criminal Court has the power to recognize those crimes that are stipulated in the Rome Statute.

As a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols, Mexico has resolutely joined the campaign for ratification of the Protocols. We call upon States that have not already done so to ratify those and other instruments designed to ensure the greatest protection for those who today are affected by the scourge of war, exploitation and violence. Mexico will continue to guide the work of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict inclusively and with determination and transparency until the end of its mandate as a non-permanent member of the Security Council.

We would like to focus on five aspects: first, strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism to guarantee the provision of objective and verifiable information that will permit timely action by the United Nations system and follow-up to the recommendations of the Working Group; secondly, promoting the implementation of action plans aimed at ending the recruitment and use of children and crimes perpetrated against them; thirdly, improving the impact of our decisions on the comprehensive protection of children, including open meetings for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to present her reports; fourthly, ensuring that our recommendations promote full respect for international humanitarian law and human rights by all parties to a conflict; and finally, supporting the establishment of comprehensive programmes to rehabilitate and reintegrate children in the ranks of armed groups into their families and communities, as well as preventing new violations and abuses against them.

Close international cooperation on all these issues is crucial to providing comprehensive and sustainable solutions that meet the needs of children in situations of violence and armed conflict. This task requires the commitment of us all, as well as our coordinated efforts with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, UNICEF, United Nations agencies and programmes, and civil society organizations. Protecting the most vulnerable is not only an ethical imperative; today, protecting our children, who should never take any part in any armed conflict, is also protecting our nations, whose strengths, deepest values and hopes are embodied in those children. I thank the Council for its support in favour of a better world for the children of our planet.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I support the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union. I would like to thank the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico for taking the initiative to convene the Security Council to address the issue of children and armed conflict. We welcome the Council's sending of an unmistakable message to parties who continue to violate the rights of children in armed conflict. If

parties to a conflict refuse to take the path of dialogue and do not implement action plans in spite of the repeated appeals of the Security Council to do so, we should not hesitate when considering targeted and strong sanctions against them.

The mechanism set up in the draft presidential statement to be adopted today aims at greater integration of the protection of children in armed conflict into the work of the sanctions committees. In this respect, we invite Ms. Coomaraswamy to begin direct dialogue with the committee experts without delay.

In the absence of a sanctions committee or when it would take too long to establish one, the Security Council can act directly, when necessary, through a resolution adopted under Chapter VII. In that respect, the responsiveness of our Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should be improved. Beyond implementing sanctions, we agree with the analysis and recommendations developed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2010/181) to put an end to the heinous acts referred to therein and to ensure that their perpetrators are brought to justice. In this respect, we welcome the actions of the International Criminal Court, among which the current war crimes trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo is a prime example.

Since its creation five years ago, the Working Group has focused on the recruitment and use of child soldiers and has achieved results contributing to the release of tens of thousands of children. However, we remain in the implementation phase of resolution 1882 (2009), which added rape and other sexual violence, as well as killing and maiming contrary to international law, to the criteria for listing parties to conflict on the Secretary-General's naming-and-shaming list. In our view, this will require making more resources available to the Council's monitoring and reporting mechanism and to the implementation of action plans. It will also require taking better into account the cross-border dimension of some conflicts, including but not exclusively in Africa.

Finally, we believe that it would be desirable to give increased attention to attacks against educational facilities, which are increasing throughout the world, with a view to expanding the criteria for adding parties to conflict to the Secretary-General's naming-and-shaming list. We would like to see specific recommendations on this issue in the next report of the Secretary-General.

The work of our Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict will be marked by some important developments in the coming months. First, we will need to resolve the recurring question of its administrative support. Today, that job is wholly dependent on the goodwill of the Mexican Mission. We hope to see proposals from the Secretary-General on this issue in the coming weeks in order to relieve our Mexican friends of that duty. Next, the Working Group will have to undertake a country visit. We would be pleased for such a mission to take place by the end of the year.

Finally, the action plans will have to be implemented in the field. To that end, France will co-organize with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF and its partners in the Steering Committee the third Ministerial Follow-up Forum to the Paris Commitments and Paris Principles on 27 September. It will focus on the financial commitment of the international community to ensure, inter alia, that children who are victims of violations benefit from care and adequate reintegration programmes.

I wish to conclude by affirming that France supports without reservation the campaign launched by the Secretary-General aimed at the universal ratification within two years of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. We call on all States, as you have done, Madam Minister, that have not yet ratified this instrument to do so as soon as possible.

Ms. Rice (United States of America): My thanks go in particular to Special Representative Coomaraswamy for her thorough briefing and her passionate commitment to this cause. I would also like to thank UNICEF Deputy Executive Director Hilde Johnson and Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Atul Khare for their very passionate and informative briefings. But I should like especially to thank Manju Gurung for her presence here and her statement to the Council. Her courage and her example are extraordinary, and all of us can only begin to imagine how difficult and daunting it must be to speak before a Council like this in a room like this. We wish her to know how much we admire her and

how much we are here cheering for her and for a brighter, safer and more peaceful future. We wish her all the best.

The nineteenth century American abolitionist Frederick Douglass once said, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Two centuries later, we see the truth of that insight in country after country, in conflict after conflict. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) makes painfully clear, children are abused and children's rights are violated in armed conflicts in many areas of the world. Even after such conflicts end, the scars remain. Children exposed to violence or trauma, especially prolonged trauma, are more likely to have their social, emotional and cognitive development impaired. And such ordeals inflict psychological damage that can endure for years to come.

The litany of abuses is grim: outright killing, maiming, forced participation in armed conflict, rape, sexual exploitation and other forms of sexual violence. Those outrages not only rob children of their innocence and limit their full and meaningful participation in their societies, but they also risk further stoking the very conflicts in which these children so gravely suffer. Parties that commit violations against children plunder the future of their countries and threaten international peace and security.

The United States fully and firmly embraces our responsibility to protect children, and we will not rest until the last abuse is halted and the last child soldier is released. We welcome the Secretary-General's report as an important tool to help us uphold that common responsibility. We are glad to note that for the first time the report's annexes include parties that have engaged in patterns of killing, maiming, raping and sexually abusing children in contravention of applicable international law.

We urge that all information on violations identified by the monitoring and reporting mechanism be thoroughly verified to ensure a high degree of accuracy. We agree with the report's recommendation to ensure that specific language on protecting children is placed in the mandates of both the relevant United Nations peacekeeping operations and those of political, humanitarian and peacebuilding missions. We also agree that, given the regional dimensions of some conflicts highlighted in the report, these missions should speed their development of strategies and coordination mechanisms for better information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection issues.

We support the Secretary-General's recommendation to include the unlawful recruitment or use of children as a listing criterion in appropriate Security Council sanctions regimes, and we strongly encourage closer cooperation and coordination among the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, these sanctions committees and their expert groups. As the Secretary-General suggests, such coordination would let us weigh the application of "more vigorous measures against persistent violators" (S/2010/181, para. 186) when that is appropriate.

We take heart from several instances in which parties and former parties to armed conflict have taken meaningful steps to protect children, from Afghanistan to Burundi and Nepal, often after strong encouragement from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Nevertheless, violations and abuses against children are endemic in far too many places. The United States is particularly concerned about the situation in Somalia. Active recruitment of child soldiers has placed several thousand children in the line of fire. We strongly condemn the use of child soldiers by any group, and we call on parties to the conflict in Somalia to immediately cease child recruitment and release those who remain within their ranks.

Equally, we continue to be gravely concerned over developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Virtually every party engaged in the conflict there actively and unlawfully recruits children. Hundreds of children were shoved into the ranks of combatants there last year. We particularly abhor the actions of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which makes a practice of forced recruitment through abduction.

The United States is also deeply disturbed by the situation in the Central African Republic, where the active and unlawful recruitment of children is so bad that, as the Secretary-General notes, children now comprise a full third of the total self-defence militias and where the LRA continues its reprehensible acts.

We do see some hard-won progress, thanks in no small part to the efforts of Special Representative Coomaraswamy, as well as moves towards mainstreaming this issue across the whole of the United Nations system. But the grievous examples of violations and abuses against children — whether in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia or a number of other places — remind us that the pace of progress is too slow for too many children. Much more work must be done, and we have no time to spare.

The United States will remain fully and deeply dedicated to preventing the violations and abuses committed against children in armed conflict. We will continue to strongly support the efforts of the United Nations and our many non-governmental organization partners. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our fellow Security Council members on this vital issue. We are grateful to those who organized today's important debate, but we hope that the day will soon come when such meetings will no longer be needed.

One child harmed as the result of armed conflict is one child too many, and the only morally tolerable number of child soldiers is zero.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): At the outset, I should like to welcome you, Madam President, and to thank you and your delegation for the commitment shown in this very important matter. I should also like to thank Ambassador Heller and the Mission here for their excellent work in preparing for this important debate.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be made later on behalf of the European Union. As a member of the Human Security Network, as well as of the Group of Friends on Children and Armed Conflict, Austria also supports the joint statement of the Network to be delivered by Costa Rica and the first-ever joint statement of the Group of Friends, to be delivered by Canada.

I should like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Coomaraswamy, Deputy Executive Director Johnson and Assistant Secretary-General Khare for their presentations. We greatly appreciate the work of the Special Representative and of all of those who contribute to implementing the children and armed conflict agenda within the Secretariat and UNICEF.

My delegation and I personally also wish to extend a warm welcome and a word of thanks to Ms. Manju Gurung from Nepal. We thank her for having shared her thoughts and her very moving experiences, which serve as a stark reminder of why we are here today. In this context and in view of what she said, we welcome the signing of an action plan by the parties in Nepal and the swift completion of the discharge process. The successful mission of Special Representative Coomaraswamy to Nepal last December underlines the importance of her field visits for effective follow-up on the recommendations of the Security Council and its Working Group.

Progress has also been made in the past year in other parts of the world also, as set out in the Secretary-General's most recent annual report (S/2010/181). We welcome the signing of action plans to halt and prevent the recruitment and use of children with parties in the Philippines and the Sudan, as well as the positive developments in Burundi, which allowed for the de-listing of the armed groups formerly listed under that country situation.

At the same time, the fact that parties to armed conflicts have continued to commit grave violations and abuses against children in conflict situations around the world is deeply worrying. We take note of new listings of parties that recruit and use children and engage in patterns of killing and maiming or sexual violence. We call on all parties listed in the annexes immediately to halt those violations and to prepare and implement concrete, time-bound action plans to ensure the effective protection of children. We agree with the Secretary-General that direct contact between the United Nations country teams and non-State actors is important in this context. We therefore support his call on Member States to allow for such contacts in the framework of resolutions 1539 (2004), 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009).

The reported increase in attacks against schools — to which others have already referred — as well as against teachers and students, and the specific targeting of girl students in certain country situations constitute a deeply worrying development. We strongly condemn such heinous acts, which violate international humanitarian law and deprive the children concerned of any meaningful prospects for a better future.

We wish to acknowledge the detailed information provided in the Secretary-General's report on the

criteria and procedures used for listing and de-listing parties to armed conflict, as well as on the ongoing development of templates for action plans to address and prevent patterns of killing and maiming and/or rape and other sexual violence against children. We agree with the Secretary-General's understanding of the notion of a "pattern", which involves a "multiple commission of acts being perpetrated in the same context" (see S/2010/181, para. 175), but we also wish to stress that, from our point of view, this should not necessarily imply a high quantitative threshold.

With the introduction of new listing criteria in resolution 1882 (2009) the provision of timely, accurate, reliable and verifiable information to the Council, and thus an increased monitoring and reporting capacity of the United Nations system, has become even more important. We call, therefore, on all relevant United Nations entities to cooperate and coordinate in order to create synergies and to allow for the systematic exchange of information. We also believe that in certain situations — such as the case of the Lord's Resistance Army — regional cooperation among United Nations actors in the field needs to be strengthened.

The report of the Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to those parties to conflict that continue to commit crimes against children despite repeated calls of the Council. The Council must be determined to ensure respect for its resolutions, and it needs to be prepared to take vigorous measures against persistent perpetrators.

In order to increase the coherence of the Council's work, provisions pertaining to violations of international law committed against children should be included in the mandates of the relevant sanctions committees. Interaction of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict with sanctions committees and their expert groups should be enhanced. The recent briefing by Special Representative Coomaraswamy to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which included provision of specific information on individuals recruiting and using children, was an important first step that will enable the Committee to take action. In this context, we also support the Secretary-General's recommendation to incorporate child protection expertise in sanctions committees' expert groups. At the same time, the Council must also consider specific recommendations from its Working Group on parties committing violations and abuses against children, in order to take direct action in particularly serious situations where no sanctions committee is in place.

We welcome the fact that the presidential statement to be adopted at the end of this debate addresses these issues in a forward-looking manner.

In closing, let me express my country's sincere appreciation for the excellent work that has been carried out by the Mexican Chair of the Working Group over the past one and a half years. The Group has been doing important work in developing concrete recommendations on various situations on the basis of country-specific reports of the Secretary-General and exchanges with the Member States concerned. In view of the considerable workload, as well as the urgent need to build up a historical memory — and here I am also repeating something that has already been said today — Austria strongly supports the repeated request to the Secretary-General to provide administrative support to the Group. This could also enable the Group further to improve its working methods and the follow-up of its conclusions and recommendations, as well as to proceed to a more effective use of its toolkit, in particular through the timely realization of a field visit.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank you, Madam Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, for organizing and presiding over this important debate on children and armed conflict. I also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General Atul Khare for their statements. I welcome Ms. Manju Gurung and salute her for her courage and for sharing her experiences in a compelling account of the story of her life in conflict.

The issue of children in armed conflict has been an important subject on the agenda of the Security Council for 11 years now. Member States have consistently articulated the plight of children in armed conflict; they have reiterated their commitments to the well-being of children and pledged support for their protection, especially in situations of armed conflict.

It is essential that children in conflict situations be protected by the international community. We note

with concern that in the annexes to the ninth annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), several armed groups associated with children are named. A number of these are in Africa. Not only do these groups recruit or abduct children, but in some cases, such as that of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), they also maim them, commit sexual violence against them or even kill them. They rob them of their freedom as well as their innocence.

Uganda calls upon all parties in situations of armed conflict to adhere to international normative instruments protecting educational facilities from attack. We strongly condemn wilful attacks against schools and other educational facilities, as well as the deliberate targeting of girls by armed groups. Uganda has had first-hand experience of attacks against schools, as well as of the abduction of students. In June 1998, 12 years ago, an armed group calling itself the Allied Democratic Front raided a technical college in western Uganda and burned 80 students alive in three dormitories. That armed group also abducted more than 100 students.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Uganda is a party to both Optional Protocols, and we encourage Member States that have not yet done so to consider acceding to, ratifying and domesticating them. It is important that the reports on implementation be prepared and submitted in a timely manner.

We note the call by the Secretary-General to parties listed in the annexes of the report to prepare and implement concrete and time-bound action plans to halt those violations. It is necessary for the Security Council to consider taking measures against any parties that fail to comply. We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, on the achievements she has made in finalizing action plans with parties to conflicts in four countries and encourage her to maintain the momentum.

We also note the Secretary-General's recommendation to allow contact between the United Nations and non-State actors to ensure the broad and effective protection of children. We regard that as a positive recommendation. The spirit of that recommendation is positive, but it is important to take into account the specific conditions that may prevail on the ground.

Uganda notes the recommendation of the Secretary-General that stronger measures be taken against persistent violators who have been listed for grave violations against children in his annual reports for at least five years. It is also clear that the United Nations is at different stages of engagement with the various parties on the lists, including the negotiation of action plans. Notwithstanding the five-year timeline, Uganda encourages a broader set of conditions that would necessitate action by the Council against persistent perpetrators.

Uganda emphasizes the importance of urging relevant actors in peace processes to ensure that the concerns and needs of children in armed conflict are consistently taken into account. Given the regional dimensions of some conflicts, it is essential that relevant Member States, United Nations peacekeeping missions and country teams accelerate the development of appropriate strategies and coordination mechanisms. That is necessary for information exchange and cooperation on cross-border child protection concerns.

Uganda is convinced that this debate should further galvanize our collective efforts to protect children in situations of armed conflict. Children everywhere have the right to live in conditions that provide an opportunity for a bright and successful future. We therefore highly commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Coomaraswamy, and her staff on the work that they are doing in that direction.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I warmly welcome you, Madam President, as Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico presiding over the Council today. I also thank you for the comprehensive observations that you have made. Allow me to extend to the delegation of Mexico our most sincere congratulations on its work under the leadership of Ambassador Heller as the Chair of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and on its efforts to prepare the draft presidential statement that we are going to adopt today.

Let me thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her briefing, and the other briefers — Ms. Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF; Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations; and Ms. Manju Gurung.

Children are faced with appalling forms of abuse and violence every day in different parts of the world.

They are reported to be forcibly abducted and recruited as militants. Children are also victims of sexual trafficking, and girls in particular face sexual violence. Many children do not have access to education or basic health care during armed conflicts. We must reverse that trend and protect children at all costs, and the Council plays an imperative role in that regard.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) provides us with very useful information for ending all violations and abuses committed against children. We take note of his observations and support his recommendations. We welcome the attention focused on persistent violators.

Important progress has been made over the past year, and we welcome the adoption of resolution 1882 (2009) and the expansion of the triggers for listing to include the killing and maiming of children, as well rape and other sexual violence. Human rights violations committed against children cannot and will not be tolerated. Therefore, we believe that the protection of children is part of the collective cultural values of humanity.

Our aim in the Council for the better protection of children is stronger child protection frameworks. We must continue our collective efforts to that end. Turkey also believes in the importance of investigating, prosecuting and punishing all those who commit grave violations against children. We would also like to emphasize our grave concern about the increased number of attacks on education facilities, schools and pupils. Since education is the future of new generations, the Security Council should address the problem in its future deliberations.

While working to achieve our goals, we believe that three points should always be kept in mind. First, States must be encouraged at every stage to cooperate with the Working Group. Secondly, the work of the Group should be expedited and facilitated in order to cover more situations. Thirdly, we should give priority to the implementation of United Nations documents first.

On that last point, Turkey strongly supports each United Nations instrument and initiative related to the rights of children. We show our dedication and sensitivity to the issue of violations against children by being party to every relevant United Nations instrument. Needless to say, these United Nations instruments have become a fundamental part of Turkey's legislation. We are party to various instruments promoting the rights of children outside the framework of the United Nations. Our first priority should be to recruit every country to support and ensure the implementation of all United Nations conventions and protocols.

Children comprise almost one-third of our population. They are our future. We have to unite for their future. We should act against persistent violators of their rights to free them from the devastating effects of armed conflicts. The Security Council should not refrain from taking the essential steps to stop violations against children and to fulfil our responsibility to protect our children.

Turkey is committed to contributing to all efforts in order to halt persistent perpetrators of crimes against children, and we call all Member States to be active on the issue.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank you, Madam President, for your presence here to preside over this important debate. I also thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and the other speakers, Mr. Khare and Ms. Johnson, for their briefings. We underscore the courage of Ms. Manju Gurung and thank her for her testimony, which puts a human face on the violations and crimes we are discussing today.

Children's right to life, security, health care and education continues to be violated by armed conflict. The lost childhood of such children is a threat to the peace and security of the societies to which they belong and prevents them from building prosperous nations that respect international law.

In our region, a just and lasting peace cannot be established while ongoing and constant threats to the physical security of our children persist. These threats include the cluster bombs that Israel has placed in Lebanon and Gaza, which continue to maim our children. The Gaza embargo also continues to have devastating consequences for our children, who comprise 45 per cent of the population there.

Resolution 1882 (2009) represents critical progress in the protection of children because it introduces two new criteria — sexual violence and killing and maiming — for listing parties to armed conflict in the annexes of the Secretary-General's

annual reports. Even so, Lebanon believes that the six serious violations enumerated in resolution 1612 (2005) are all of equal gravity and should be accorded the same attention by the Working Group. We hope that one day the criteria for listing in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports will be extended to those six violations; failure to do so would be tantamount to silence concerning the heinous crimes perpetrated against thousands of children. No measure to address grave violations should be limited to post-conflict symptoms; any such measure must be part of a strategy to prevent conflict and address the underlying causes of emergent conflicts.

The protection of children should also be reflected in the Security Council's resolutions concerning specific countries. In this case, we welcome the adoption by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the guidelines on the protection of children. Like the Secretary-General, we reaffirm the importance of deploying child protection advisers in missions. We encourage the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to design a predictable and stable financing structure that would ensure the resources necessary to implementing the action plans. We also urge donors to provide the necessary funding to national Governments, the United Nations and its partners in order to ensure the rehabilitation and reintegration of children who have been associated with armed forces or groups.

Twelve years ago, the Security Council considered the topic of children and armed conflict for the first time. We have come a long way since then and achieved some progress. However, much remains to be done. First, we believe it imperative that the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict respond swiftly to urgent or sudden situations in which children are affected on a large scale. Secondly, we underscore the importance of appeals for a more effective follow-up to the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group. In his report (S/2010/181), the Secretary-General notes that impunity remains prevalent and that the prosecution of parties to conflicts listed in the annexes of his reports is still rare. That is why the various United Nations bodies must facilitate coordinated support to help national authorities to establish and maintain the rule of law at the national level. That would allow perpetrators to be held accountable for their actions — a decisive factor in protecting children.

The harmful psychosocial consequences of conflicts on the mental health of children and on stability and lasting peace in post-conflict societies cannot be ignored. Despite the efforts of the United Nations and relevant actors, gaps remain in the reintegration phase, especially in the psychosocial area. We therefore encourage the United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, alongside national authorities, to jointly improve psychosocial support services to demobilized children and all children affected by armed conflict.

We have the ethical and moral responsibility to protect future generations from the scourge of armed conflict. We must focus our efforts on attenuating the emotional, physical and psychological impact on children who, with their well-being and often with their lives, daily pay the price of wars they have not chosen.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I congratulate the representative of Lebanon on her excellent Spanish and thank her for making the effort to deliver her statement in my language.

Mr. Issoze-Ngondet (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): My delegation should like to a pay a special tribute, Madame, to your country, Mexico, for your interest in the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Your country's outstanding chairmanship of the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and your presence at today's debate clearly attest to that interest.

My delegation also thanks Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her exceptional introduction of the Secretary-General's ninth annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181), and reaffirms our support for her efforts to promote the cause of children affected by the scourge of war. We also note the deeply moving testimony of Ms. Manju, a former child soldier, on the war in Nepal. It not only reminded us of the gravity and urgency of the phenomenon, but also encouraged us to listen to and involve children in the settlement of problems that concern them.

My delegation wishes to speak on the following three points: the impact on children of new forms of warfare, progress made, and challenges and prospects ahead.

New forms of armed conflict, marked by the growing involvement of non-State actors and non-traditional forms of combat, complicate the

objective assessment of the impact of war on children. In addition to this there is the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the increase in armed groups, the emergence of resource wars and the internationalization of terrorism, which constantly fuel a culture of violence, especially against children.

In his periodic report on children and armed conflict in 2005 (S/2005/72), the Secretary-General identified six violations of the rights of children in conflict zones, namely, killing or maiming, the recruitment of child soldiers, attacks against schools or hospitals, rape or other forms of sexual violence, the abduction of children and the denial of humanitarian access for children. Gabon vigorously condemns these heinous and shameful practices, which offend morality and undermine human dignity.

One of the most significant achievements of the last ten years has been the recognition by the international community that political and diplomatic commitment is crucial in responding to the suffering of children affected by armed conflict. The Security Council played a decisive role in acknowledging, in resolution 1261 (1999), that the protection of children in armed conflict affects international peace and security. The many resolutions adopted since then by the Council and by the General Assembly on this matter bear witness to this. Thus, the problems linked to children are taken into account today in negotiations of peace agreements and in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

In adopting, in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005), a monitoring and reporting mechanism for countries at war and a working group on children in armed conflict, the Council wanted to have reliable and timely information on the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflicts, as well as on other violations of children's rights. Despite this progress, the international community has many challenges to overcome in this area. The reality on the ground remains very worrisome.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2010/181) reveals that many national armies and armed groups continue to recruit and use children. Therefore we welcome the publication in the annexes of the report of the Secretary-General of the lists of those who violate the rights of children, which certainly constitutes progress towards possible legal proceedings against them.

My country is pleased by the fact that at a regional conference held in N'Djamena from 8 to 9 June 2010, the States of Central Africa adopted the N'Djamena Declaration reaffirming their commitment to put an end to the enrolment of children in armed conflict, with a view to strengthening peace and security and promoting development of the subregion, where there are more than 30,000 child soldiers.

The protection of children in armed conflict is a shared responsibility. Gabon considers relevant the recommendation of the Secretary-General to ensure that the question of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict could be examined at all levels of the Security Council's activities, including in the counter-terrorism committees.

That recommendation includes another proposal which urges the participation of experts on questions linked to the protection of children in all United Nations peace missions, including peacekeeping operations and political missions. It would also be wise for the Council to establish a sanctions committee on the violations of the rights of children affected by armed conflicts. Generally speaking, our action in fighting impunity with respect to violations of the rights of children will not be truly effective unless we increase our awareness campaigns with the goal of leading the largest number of leaders and individuals to accept and understand the validity of this struggle.

The presidential statement that we shall adopt at the end of this debate should lay the bases for a common ethic, the commitment of all of us — Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations — to act together in the interest of the children of the entire world and of future generations.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to you, Sir, for your initiative in holding today's meeting and to the Secretary-General for preparing the overview report (S/2010/181). We also thank Ms. Coomaraswamy, Mr. Khare, Ms. Johnson and Ms. Gurung for their information.

Russia supports the call by the Secretary-General to give due attention to all serious violations of the rights of children in conflict. Crimes against children should not go unpunished. In this connection, we welcome the first practical steps for including in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report information

on parties to conflict that are responsible for killing and injuring children and rape and other sexual abuse. However, we wish to stress the need to consider correctly the issue of including in the report information on specific country situations. In particular, we do not believe it is right to include in the current report several situations — specifically, India, Pakistan and Yemen — that cannot be called armed conflicts.

We firmly condemn premeditated attacks on civilians, including children, and the deadly, indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force, as described by the Secretary-General. Of particular concern for us is what the report mentions with regard to the increasing trend in the number of attacks by parties to conflicts on education facilities.

Russia condemns the grave violations of international humanitarian law during operation Cast Lead in Gaza, which took the lives of hundreds of children and destroyed schools. The statistics in the report cannot leave anyone indifferent. We once again call on parties to conflicts to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against civilian populations.

Children continue to be victims of conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, where armed groups attack the civilian population and carry out terrorist acts. It is important that Al-Qaida and the Taliban are once again included in the list of violators. Unfortunately, children in those countries are dying because of the actions of foreign forces that are supposed to defend them. We consider unjustified the attempts to describe deaths of children as collateral damage. That is also in line with the Geneva Conventions. We favour looking closely at such incidents and punishing those responsible.

We welcome the work of the United Nations missions and country teams aimed at getting parties to conflict to accept action plans to prevent and halt violations of the rights of children. However, contact with United Nations structures and non-State armed groups can take place only with the agreement of the Governments involved. Moreover, action plans are important instruments in protecting children and should not be seen as a goal in and of themselves. True improvements in the situation for children in the field is much more important for assessing progress than promises that exist on paper but are often not fulfilled.

The Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, led by France and later by Mexico, did a significant amount of work in developing recommendations on concrete situations. In order to effectively implement them, it is necessary to develop constructive cooperation with the concerned Governments.

We studied with interest the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report. We believe that most of them deserve close study and analysis, including from the point of view of practical application. In particular, we consider that an exchange of views on the criteria for qualifying parties to conflicts as persistent violators would be useful. We believe that a brief mention in the annexes to a report of the Secretary-General is insufficient in this context.

We are grateful to the delegation of Mexico for preparing the draft presidential statement that we will adopt today.

Mr. Moretti (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): It has been an honour for my delegation to have had the presence of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Her Excellency Patricia Espinosa, in the Council this morning. I thank you, Sir, and your delegation for the initiative in convening this important meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, for her outstanding work and her remarks today. We also thank the Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF and the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations for their statements.

I would like to give particular thanks to Manju for her vivid testimony about her experience as a child soldier in Nepal. I commend her for her courage and determination. It is disturbing that such experiences are repeated day after day for thousands of children around the world.

The case for the protection of children in armed conflict is morally compelling. In cases where it involves a threat to international peace and security, the Security Council must take action to prevent and halt violence against children.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) demonstrates the success of the work that

Ms. Coomaraswamy's office has been carrying out in conjunction with other actors, such as UNICEF. The release of children associated with armed groups in several countries, as described in the report, is cause for genuine celebration. The signing of action plans with groups in the Philippines, the Sudan and Nepal is also worthy of recognition. At the same time, the numerous instances in which violations continue unabated are a sobering reminder that much remains to be done.

Monitoring violations and gathering accurate information remains a challenge. Close coordination with local authorities and other relevant actors is key. It is also important to identify and compile best practices in this field and to consolidate the methodology for collecting data, particularly with regard to sexual violence, where the greatest challenges lie.

Another source of concern is the issue of accountability relating to crimes against children. Improvements in this area require strong support by means of technical assistance and capacity-building. It may be worth considering ways by which multilateral organizations and governments can cooperate with interested States in that regard. That would be particularly relevant in those cases where shortcomings are due mostly to lack of funding, expertise or judicial structures.

The Council and the Working Group should bear in mind social and economic conditions affecting children in armed conflict. In many situations poverty and social injustice, although never a justification for violations and abuses against children, make them more likely. The Working Group could make recommendations regarding specific socio-economic conditions affecting child protection in the context of armed conflict.

Where there is a peacekeeping operation on the ground, child protection should be integrated into the mission-wide protection strategies called for in resolution 1894 (2009), as happens in many cases. Those strategies can include plans to effectively protect educational facilities and to build capacity so that community leaders can help identify, as early as possible, attempts by armed groups to recruit or harass children.

I would like to make two brief points on the functioning of the Working Group. First and foremost, it is imperative that it be provided with sufficient administrative support by the Secretariat, as has been repeatedly requested. We are especially concerned with the preservation of the Group's institutional memory, which is particularly necessary for the elected members to adequately participate in its work. Secondly, we would support efforts to ensure that the Working Group is able to deal in a timely fashion with the numerous situations on its agenda.

In closing, I wish to reiterate my Government's commitment to the protection of children in all situations, not only through the action of the Security Council, where violations may affect peace and security, but also through the United Nations agencies, funds and programs and through bilateral cooperation.

Mr. Barbalić (Bosnia and Herzegovina): At the outset, we would like to thank you, Mr. President, and Her Excellency Ms. Patricia Espinosa Cantellano for convening this debate, thus showing that Mexico attaches special interest to the issue of children in armed conflict. As a country with critical experience, Bosnia and Herzegovina feels particularly strongly about this topic, and we consider that giving high priority to protection of children in armed conflict is of vital importance. I would like to reiterate Bosnia and Herzegovina's appreciation for Mexico's tireless efforts and for chairing the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Allow me also to express our appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Atul Khare, and the Deputy Director of UNICEF, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, for their briefings. We are grateful to Manju Gurung for sharing her story with us today. We really feel and respect her courage, and I believe we all heard very important messages that we have to consider in future.

Bosnia and Herzegovina highly appreciates and supports the work of Ms. Coomaraswamy, whose outreach activities and field visits contributed significantly to improving the situation of children in armed conflict. The pragmatic and cooperative approach, with a humanitarian emphasis aimed at ensuring broad and effective protection for children exposed to and affected by conflict in situations of concern, is of key importance.

We also align ourselves with the statement to be delivered by the representative of the European Union later today.

Bosnia and Herzegovina takes positive note of the Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) and the recommendations contained therein. Significant progress has been made with regard to the signing of action plans to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and to secure their release from armed forces and groups.

We are encouraged by the fact that some parties to armed conflict have made progress in releasing child soldiers. Nevertheless, we are deeply concerned that the practice of recruiting and using children has continued in the past year. While stressing the primary role of national Governments in providing protection and relief to all children affected by armed conflicts, we urge all parties to conflicts to fully comply with international humanitarian law and human rights law with regard to protecting the civilian population. All countries and groups must place the protection of children in situations of armed conflict above politics.

Furthermore, we urge the parties to conflict listed in the annexes in the Secretary-General's report to engage in constructive dialogue in order to prepare and implement the time-bound action plans to stop recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children and killing and maiming of children. This process should be conducted through efficient coordination among different actors in the field, including the host Government, United Nations entities, donors and non-governmental organizations.

We would encourage donors to ensure sufficient, timely and adequate funding for the implementation of action plans. In this context, education packages and access with regard to basic needs such as nutrition, health and water, as well as psychological support for reintegration of child soldiers into their families and communities, should be ensured and all barriers to access removed.

Recognizing the important role of education, we are deeply concerned about the growing number of attacks against schools, educational facilities, teachers and pupils. In times of conflict all steps should be taken to safeguard the right to education. All parties to conflict should keep schools as protected areas and zones of peace for boys and girls.

Bosnia and Herzegovina considers that targeted, gradual and more vigorous measures against those groups and individuals who persistently commit grave violations against children should be undertaken. In order to end impunity for violations against children, Member States must uphold existing international standards and operationalize their obligations through accelerated national legislative reform and systematic implementation and monitoring. Perpetrators should be brought to justice in compliance with international justice mechanisms, criminal courts and tribunals.

The Paris Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups advocate a comprehensive approach to reintegrating children into their communities. Including children in peacebuilding activities is one of the key elements of each peacebuilding strategy. Special attention should be given to refugee and displaced children, children with disabilities and those who have been subjected to sexual violence. We believe that their participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes is critical. It is of utmost importance to continue including specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of all relevant United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and political missions; Child Protection Advisers should be deployed in those missions.

Many positive developments with regard to monitoring and reporting have been seen since the adoption of resolutions 1539 (2004) and 1612 (2005). However, much more remains to be done. We are of the view that the monitoring and reporting system should be strengthened and its capacities developed for effective and timely response to all violations and abuses committed against children, in particular with regard to collecting reliable and verifiable information on acts of rape and acts of sexual violence. It is crucial that country task forces on monitoring and reporting follow up developments and the implementation of recommendations of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

Cooperation and exchange of information between the Security Council Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict and relevant sanctions committees should be improved. Sanctions committees should consider inviting the Office of the Special Representative, as was the case in May with regard to

the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to brief them more regularly on specific recommendations in the Secretary-General's reports. We believe that such cooperation can add value to the efforts of the Working Group and, at the same time, contribute significantly towards more efficient use of the Working Group's recommendations.

Finally, Bosnia and Herzegovina fully supports the adoption by the Security Council of an action-oriented presidential statement, convinced that more positive examples will follow.

Mr. Lolo (Nigeria): Madam President, let me join others in welcoming you to this debate and in thanking you for your leadership. Also, let me commend your country for the choice of topic for our discussion today.

I should like in addition to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for her tireless efforts and her contribution to the task of protecting the rights and welfare of children. The growing culture of cooperation on this issue between State actors, the United Nations and other relevant agencies is a credit to Ms. Coomaraswamy's leadership. Working together to devise and implement time-bound action plans for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict, these actors make an important contribution to the task of protecting the rights and welfare of that vulnerable group.

Children are not only victims of armed conflicts; they also suffer the worst effects of their debilitating consequences. Defenceless and powerless, children are killed and maimed and are used and abused in these situations, as we heard this morning in the compelling account of Ms. Manju Gurung. We commend her for her courage in telling her story before the Security Council.

Where they survive, their future is often marked by neglect, rejection and even ostracism. We are convinced that, so long as there is armed conflict, the international community must take appropriate measures to protect the most vulnerable groups, of which children constitute a significant component. Our interventions must aim at preventing their involvement or use in armed conflicts in violation of international law.

One cannot overstate the need for the Council to continue to pay attention to the issue of children and armed conflict. Indeed, over the past decade the Council has demonstrated its commitment to improving the plight of such children, beginning with its landmark resolution 1261 (1999) and most recently through resolution 1882 (2009). Resolution 1621 (2005), which created the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, provides another key mechanism that has allowed the Council to give practical expression to the protection of children in armed conflict.

We are pleased that resolution 1882 (2009) has extended the reach of the Secretary-General's reporting framework to cover additional violations and to address conflict situations not on the Council's agenda. That resolution also broadened the conceptual scope of the issue to include killing, maiming and rape and other sexual violence inflicted on children in these circumstances. Fittingly, the issue of children and armed conflict has become more deeply embedded in the business of the Council.

We applaud the progress that has been achieved in the adoption of appropriate instruments and the establishment of relevant institutional frameworks related to children and armed conflict. Those countries that have willingly submitted themselves to United Nations support and strategies are to be commended. In addition, the N'Djamena Declaration on child soldiers, signed last week by Nigeria and five other countries, demonstrates the commitment to tackling this issue.

While these successes should be recognized, it is clear that much work remains to be done. Nigeria is concerned that persistent violators cited in the annexes of the Secretary-General's reports for at least five years have not received the Council's attention with a view to ensuring their accountability.

In our view, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict should be encouraged to continue to monitor, assess, consult and report objectively on the range of issues affecting children in armed conflict. The Council should take steps to ensure that substantive administrative support is provided to the Working Group to enhance its capacity to discharge its mandate. There is also need for coordination among the Working Group, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the relevant sanctions committees to ensure that

the recommendations of the sanctions committees adequately respond to the protection imperatives of armed conflicts.

For its part, the Council should be seen to facilitate progress. It should be more responsive to the conclusions and recommendations of the Working Group, and it should use its considerable authority to ensure that violators of children in armed conflict are held to account.

As a troop-contributing country, Nigeria supports the inclusion of specific provisions for the protection of children in the mandates of all United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. We also support the efforts of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to develop and implement appropriate training programmes and material for all United Nations peacekeepers. Support should also be given for the integration of this successful strategy into the work of the Department of Political Affairs in its political missions. We believe that this will not only prepare the missions to better handle child-specific issues that are inevitable in conflict and post-conflict situations, but will also help to establish best practices for emulation by the international community.

We welcome the Secretary-General's suggestion to make the provision of peacekeeping support to national forces that may be committing serious human rights violations conditional on compliance with international law. We hope that this will propel the integration of child protection measures into all medium- and long-term peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies.

The Council should continue to send a strong a clear warning that abuses and violations against children in armed conflict situations will not go unpunished.

Finally, we endorse the draft presidential statement to be issued at the end of this debate.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): Madam President, I would like to join other speakers in thanking you for organizing today's important debate. Mexico has given outstanding leadership on this issue in the Security Council, as demonstrated by your presence today. We greatly appreciate that. I would also like to thank Hilde Frafjord Johnson and Atul Khare for their interventions and to thank in particular Manju Gurung for her powerful and moving testimony. I commend Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy for her efforts. It is her commitment and leadership that have led to much of the progress we have made on the protection of children over the past year.

And there has been progress. Without the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, more than 350 children in Burundi would not now be with their families. Such success underlines the difference that we collectively can make. But where systematic and persistent violations continue, we must make every effort to bring those violations to a swift end. I would like to focus on three points.

First, the United Kingdom firmly believes that the greatest impact on the lives of children in armed conflict can be made through the implementation of country action plans. We welcome the new action plans in the Sudan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as the new country task forces for monitoring and reporting, notably in Afghanistan. In the Sudan, the United Kingdom will work alongside others to implement security sector reform in Southern Sudan to help the Sudan People's Liberation Army develop as an accountable and disciplined body operating with respect for human rights. In Sri Lanka, we were heartened to see the recent release of all registered child soldiers. The United Kingdom supports UNICEF's vital work in ending the recruitment of children in Sri Lanka and in facilitating the release and reintegration of former child soldiers.

Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations have also contributed greatly to information-gathering on children and armed conflict. We urge all those parties that have signed national action plans to honour their commitments and redouble their efforts. Those yet to sign must engage with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and commit to ending violations against children.

Secondly, as the Security Council acknowledged in resolution 1882 (2009), children are subject not just to recruitment, but also to killing and maiming and rape and other sexual violence. The Secretary-General's report (S/2010/181) contains valuable analysis of these abhorrent violations. Reporting and follow-up action should be further strengthened. We are particularly concerned about attacks on education, which are mentioned in the report. The country task forces should enhance monitoring and reporting in that

particular area. Children must be able to learn, and teachers must be able to teach, free from the threat of rape or sexual violence.

Thirdly, we must make better use of the reporting we receive here at the Council. The Security Council Working Group should produce conclusions that are robust and timely and that hold violators to account.

It is clear that, although there has been progress, many challenges remain. As we know, many children's lives remain at risk from conflict on a daily basis. In Burma, the conflict continues to place children in grave danger. We urge all parties to allow full access to the United Nations task force and the International Labour Organization. While we welcome the Government of Burma's establishment of a committee to prevent military recruitment of under-age children, still greater efforts are needed to ensure that officers and communities are aware of the law on the recruitment of children and that complaints and cases are investigated.

The United Kingdom remains committed to tackling the issue of children and armed conflict. We will continue to work with our partners in the international community to create a safer environment for children around the world. Today's draft presidential statement gives us a good basis from which to do so, and we strongly support it.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. I should also like to thank Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Hilde Frafjord Johnson, Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Mr. Atul Khare, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and Ms. Manju Gurung, a child from Nepal, for their briefings.

China attaches importance to the issue of children and armed conflict. We condemn and oppose the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other violations of children's rights in armed conflict. We support the efforts of the United Nations, including the Security Council, to promote the protection of children in armed conflict. In that regard, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, in order to ensure the protection of children in armed conflict, it is necessary to begin at the source and pursue a comprehensive approach. The Security Council bears the grave responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It should attach greater importance to the prevention, suppression and elimination of armed conflicts, so as to prevent the occurrence of tragedies. The international community should redouble its efforts to eliminate poverty, universalize education and promote sustainable development, so as to create a security and social environment conducive to the healthy growth of children. That would be the best way to protect children.

Secondly, in considering the issue of children and armed conflict, it is necessary to take into account local conditions and to proceed accordingly. The nature of conflict situations varies, as do situations both on and off the agenda of the Security Council. In that regard, it is always necessary to attach importance to the protection of children. However, there should be differences in the actual approach. It is necessary that we not disregard existing differences or apply a single approach to every situation. China is not in favour of the frequent use or threat of use of sanctions by the Security Council. It is in particular necessary to use caution when it comes to the issue of children and armed conflict.

Thirdly, in addressing the issue of children and armed conflict, it is necessary to fully utilize the role of the Governments of the countries concerned. The relevant resolutions of the Security Council stipulate that Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of the children of their countries. The Security Council and its Working Group should have more communication with the countries concerned and endorse and support the positive measures adopted, continually increase mutual trust and avoid politicizing children's issues. In gathering information and carrying out field work, it is necessary to cooperate with the Governments of the countries concerned, so as to improve efficiency and generate synergies.

The efforts of the Security Council alone are not enough to truly to change the situation of children and armed conflict and give them a good future. We encourage United Nations bodies, regional organizations, the World Bank, other international agencies and non-governmental organizations to strengthen their coordination and cooperation, adopt an integrated strategy, exploit their own strengths and work together to help countries in conflict to increase their capacity to protect children. China will continue

to work together with the rest of the international community and to make its due contribution to the protection of children.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I too would like to extend a warm welcome to you, Madam President, and to thank you for personally presiding over this important debate. It is a great pleasure to discuss the issue of children and armed conflict under your presidency. I would like to pay special tribute to the Government of Mexico and its Mission here for very ably chairing the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, as well as to Canada for chairing the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict at the United Nations. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms. Coomaraswamy, Ms. Johnson and Mr. Khare for their briefings. Most of all, Ms. Manju Gurung has inspired us all with her courage and her strong faith in a better future.

The United Nations architecture on children and armed conflict — including the monitoring and reporting mechanism, action plans and the Working Group — have been in place for almost five years now. During those years, there has been steady progress in reducing the number of child soldiers in the world. Some parties to conflict have been de-listed from the annexes to the Secretary-General's reports, such as Burundi in the most recent report (S/2010/181). Parties in the Sudan, Nepal and the Philippines recently signed action plans. In another welcome move, six Central African countries adopted the N'Djamena Declaration last week and committed themselves to taking measures to protect children according to global standards.

Meanwhile, however, some new conflict parties have been listed. The latest report of the Secretary-General contains a list of 55 conflict parties in 13 countries. Clearly, there still remains a major challenge in eliminating the scourge of inhuman treatment of children trapped in armed conflict.

Today I would like to address three issues. The first is accountability for persistent perpetrators. Japan is particularly concerned about 16 parties which have been listed for the past five years. In order to ensure accountability for those persistent perpetrators, the Security Council agreed in resolution 1539 (2004) to consider the possibility of imposing targeted measures against those groups. But the practice is not necessarily consistent or even.

To hold persistent perpetrators accountable, the Security Council should include in its resolutions on the sanctions committees provisions in respect of conflict parties who commit serious violations against children. The Working Group should exchange information and coordinate closely with the work of the sanctions committees. The informal briefing given the other day by Ms. Coomaraswamy to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo was useful, as would be others she could make in the future. We very much encourage other sanctions committees to invite her and to consider similar briefings.

The second issue is rape and other sexual violence. We welcome the fact that, in accordance with resolution 1882 (2009), the report of the Secretary-General this year has listed for the first time the parties responsible for rape and other sexual violence. The report's indication of a relatively low incidence of sexual violence against children does not reflect the reality on the ground or the practice of parties. We believe that it reflects the difficulty of collecting and verifying information on sexual violence in conflict situations. Timely and reliable data are indispensable for appropriate action. Japan is particularly grateful to the efforts of UNICEF and peacekeeping operations personnel on the ground in collecting information and data on sexual violence. We encourage Ms. Coomaraswamy to coordinate closely with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict in the monitoring and reporting of sexual violence against children.

Third is the issue of attacks against education. Japan believes that education is the most essential means of promoting human potential. Achieving universal primary education is one of the fundamental pillars of the Millennium Development Goals. Therefore, we have to express strong condemnation of the widespread attacks against schools committed by several armed groups and forces, as reported in the Secretary-General's report. A new UNESCO report, "Education under Attack 2010", indicates that the number of attacks on schools, students and teachers is growing in conflict situations, and that these attacks on education appear to be far more severe and systematic than previously thought. The targeting of girl students in specific settings is a particular concern.

We call upon all conflict parties to stop and prevent attacks against schools and other educational facilities, and against teachers and pupils, including, in particular, girls, and to fully respect international humanitarian law. It is our hope that the next report of the Secretary-General will include full information and analysis on these attacks, which have a severe long-term impact on children and sound national development.

In conflict situations, children are the most vulnerable. Japan is a strong advocate of the concept of human security. I am pleased that Japan and Mexico, as co-chairs of the Friends of Human Security — which is growing — are jointly promoting the mainstreaming of this concept in the work of the United Nations. This human-centred, multisectoral approach, which focuses not only on protection but on empowerment at the individual and community levels, is particularly relevant when we consider children and armed conflict.

Japan has been providing support, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, for projects that address the issue of children and armed conflict in a comprehensive and multisectoral manner, in many countries including Timor-Leste, Nepal, the Philippines, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. Japan remains committed to strengthening the protection and empowerment of children affected on the ground.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Normandin (Canada): Madam President, I would first of all like to thank you and the delegation of Mexico for convening this important meeting. I would also like to thank all the speakers of this morning. In particular, I thank Ms. Manju Gurung for her moving and compelling statement, which reminds us of the relevance and the importance of our work.

First, let me say a few words on behalf of the Group of Friends of children and armed conflict, an informal network of over 35 interested Member States, chaired by Canada. The Group of Friends is pleased with the Security Council's commitment to strengthening accountability for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children and encourages decisive action against such perpetrators. We welcome the briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict to the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a positive step in this direction, and in line with Security Council resolutions 1698 (2006) and 1882 (2009). The Group of Friends also commends the sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its ground-breaking engagement and fully supports the designation of individuals for targeted measures, as provided for in resolution 1807 (2008).

The Group of Friends looks forward to the continuation of such fruitful collaboration between the sanctions committees, the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and stands ready to work for greater protection of children in situations of conflict.

The Group of Friends is also pleased with the work undertaken by the Security Council in progressively strengthening the protection framework for children affected by armed conflict. However, the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict is currently the only subsidiary body of the Security Council that does not receive administrative support. In order to continue the recent momentum and ensure day-to-day attention to the children and armed conflict agenda, the Working Group will need ongoing support. Therefore the Group of Friends calls for the immediate provision of administrative support, as requested in resolution 1882 (2009).

Lastly, the Group of Friends congratulates the Special Representative, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, on the launch of the campaign for universal ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

(*spoke in French*)

Speaking now in my national capacity, on behalf of Canada, I would like to formally welcome the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (S/2010/181). This debate is an opportunity to once again bring to the Security Council's attention the severity of continued acts of violence against children, and at the same time to make recommendations for the full implementation of resolution 1882 (2009).

The adoption of that resolution last August has brought forward new improvements to the children and armed conflict agenda, most notably a higher profile on rape and other forms of sexual violence against children and on the killing and maiming of children. In particular, Canada is pleased that perpetrators of sexual violence against children have been exposed in the Secretary-General's annual report. Given the on-the-ground reduction in the number of children used in hostilities, which is a result of diligent monitoring and reporting in recent years, Canada firmly believes that strong monitoring and the exposure of the perpetrators of rape and other forms of sexual violence will result in a significant reduction in the number of these incidents. With the expansion of the monitoring and reporting mechanism's mandate to include these two new triggers, strong support from the international community is required on several fronts.

First, the mechanism requires additional financial support from donors in order to be adequately resourced to deliver on its mandate. Secondly, non-governmental organizations and local civil society are key partners and should therefore be supported.

Thirdly, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, the mechanism requires the political support and cooperation of the national Governments of the countries in question, which should in particular allow access to non-State actors. Canada strongly supports the link between the United Nations and non-State actors in order to ensure that the crucial dialogue with the latter can take place and that an action plan to eliminate grave violations against children can be adopted.

Canada also welcomes the call in resolution 1889 (2009) for the element of accountability to be integrated into the agenda of the Working Group. Sanctions should be imposed more systematically in order for persistent perpetrators of grave violations against children to be held accountable. As recommended by the Secretary-General, Canada urges the Security Council to take more vigorous measures against persistent violators who have been listed in the annual report for at least five years for committing grave violations against children.

Finally, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Coomaraswamy, deserves special recognition for the wealth of information put forward by her Office and for its numerous efforts on behalf of children. She has been a tireless proponent for the protection needs of children and undertaken countless field missions. The collective experience and lessons learned by Ms. Coomaraswamy's Office, the Security Council Working Group, and the monitoring and reporting mechanisms are invaluable. They must be shared, particularly since similar processes on the protection of civilians issues have been activated.

In conclusion, Canada will continue to play a key role and help contribute to concrete results both at the United Nations and on the ground in countries of concern.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list. I therefore intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.05 p.m.